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Infinite goodness constitutes the believers true happiness in this World, and in Heaven hereafter,

A
S E R M O N,
Occasioned by the
D E A T H
O F

Mrs. ANN STEPHENSON,
Late Wife of Mr. JAMES STEPHENSON, of
Burwell, in Cambridgeshire.

Delivered immediately before her Interment,
JANUARY 20, 1770. *R*

By *J O S E P H M A U L D E N.*

The Memory of the Just is blessed. Prov. x. 7.

Published by Request.

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A

S E R M O N

Occasioned by the

D E A T H

OF

Mrs ANN STEPHENSON

Late Wife of Mr. STEPHENSON, of



Delivered immediately before her decease

JANUARY 20, 1790

BY JOSEPH H. MURDEN

For the Author, by J. H. MURDEN

Published by Request

At the Office of the British Museum

in the Strand, near the Theatre Royal

[Printed by J. H. MURDEN]

The portion of scripture allotted me by the deceased, to insist upon on this solemn occasion, was matter of great comfort and support to her precious soul, in her death-bed affliction. The words you will find in

P S A L M LXXIII. 25.

*Whom have I in heaven but thee?
And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.*

THE Psalmist, the inspired pen man whose words these are, had been under the prevalence of darkness, and unbelief: the remains of old Adam; the flesh, had for some time the ascendance; he laboured under a misunderstanding; had entertained unbecoming thoughts and apprehensions of the dispensations of God, in his giving prosperity to the wicked, in the midst of their rebellion against him; and in his afflicting the godly; or in his afflicting the psalmist himself, whose corruptions

so prevailed, that he was envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked : (not discerning at that time the gracious design of God, in his afflicting or chastening the godly ; nor his most holy design in giving prosperity to the wicked.) He could not see that the afflictions of the godly were (*being sanctified*) to purge them, to make them more humble, holy, and spiritual : nor that the wicked in all their prosperity, (*not making a proper use thereof*) were ripening for *destruction*. Hence he knew not how to reconcile the infinite justice and goodness, or mercy of God, with his prospering the wicked, in their wickedness, and his afflicting the godly. Great was his conflict, till he went into the sanctuary of God. Then, and there he understood the end of the wicked, and that their standing was upon slippery places, they soon were to be cast down into *destruction*. The good man's mistake being now rectified, and he restored to a right understanding of God's designs in such dispensations to the children of men, he is humbled under a sense of his former folly, and brought to acknowledge he was held up in the whole of his conflict by the secret power of God, from final apostacy. Oh this was infinite goodness indeed ! hence he begins this psalm abruptly, *Truly God is good to Israel* : to spiritual Israel, to all that truly fear God, *q. d.* really, 'tis a truth not to be questioned, not to be disputed, he is, and ever was good to me, or I had been eternally lost, and should have justly perished for those sins I have been guilty of, in entertaining

tertaining such irreverent, unbecoming, and depreciating thoughts of the infinitely holy, just and good God.—But by faith he saw God's infinite goodness, in guiding him with his counsel here, and that he would afterward when his (*the psalmist's*) generation work was done, receive him to glory.

Here give me leave to take notice of a mistake which prevails among many; they suppose, it is utterly impossible for any in this world, to know whether he shall enjoy eternal felicity, or suffer eternal torments. But you find, the psalmist knew that he should enjoy eternal felicity. And Job says, I [*know*] that my Redeemer liveth. David also says, the Lord is [*my*] shepherd. And many more scriptures might be produced to prove that some know their future state. But this I only glance at.

The psalmist then you plainly see knew, and was firmly persuaded that he should be received into glory.—Now, from a prospect so delightful, so ravishing as this, he breaks into a holy, and heavenly rapture, in the words of the text, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* y

We must not think the good man had no manner of desire for any sort of company, or for such things that were suitable to his present state, or station in which God had fix'd him, in these lower regions: for this would be a contradiction to other scriptures, as well as to reason, and experience in all ages. Doubtless the words
are

are to be understood, not absolutely, but comparatively; for, as a rational creature, or as a man, he could not but desire the good things of natural life, whilst he was here; such as the enjoyment of near and dear relations,—the agreeable company and delightly conversation of the godly; together with suitable supplies and supports for the outward man: In short all those agreeable accommodations which might render his passage through this thorny maze, this troublesome world, more easy and comfortable than otherwise it would be. But yet none of all these, (no, nor all of them together) could satisfy him without the enjoyment of God; and unless he could taste divine goodness in them. And even though he could enjoy creature comforts as the fruits of peculiar love, yet God was to him infinitely more desirable than them all.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? q. d. saints and angels above, are lovely creatures, but not so lovely as my God, therefore not so desirable as the enjoyment of His gracious and glorious presence in heaven. *And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,* i. e. I desire none upon earth, so as to trust in, or rest satisfied with *them*, as my chiefest good. Indeed, nothing is truly good to us, nor truly good for us, in heaven itself, (if it might be supposed a soul could be there) without the enjoyment of God. For nothing can be truly good to, nor for us on earth, without his divine blessing, and the real enjoyment of his gracious presence. A man without God,
(alienated

(*alienated from the life of God*) is a very miserable creature, though he knows it not. *A man without God in the world*, is spiritually dead; he has a dead soul in a living body.—Our text is an epitome of a truly gracious heart, a godly soul, a heaven-born creature, a god-like man; for he is one who cannot live comfortably, nor be contented without God, even though he had the whole world at his command.

By inverting the order of our text, I shall cast it into two propositions.

First, *That a godly soul is favoured with such a principle, that nothing short of infinite goodness, is sufficient to satisfy its vast desires in this world, any more than in another.* And,

Secondly, *That even heaven itself would not be a state, or place of real happiness to a gracious soul, without the enjoyment of the gracious presence of God.*

In my treating the first proposition, I shall shew,

I. *What is the principle of a truly godly soul, or that principle from whence we are denominated godly.*

II. *Why that principle is not to be satisfied with any thing short of infinite goodness.*

III. *I shall prove the point.*

I. What is this principle of the godly soul?

1st. It is a new nature; it is that which our Lord Jesus Christ implants by his Spirit, in the
souls

souls of all believers (a). It is a new creature; a vital operative power, actuating and exciting the soul, in all its spiritual motions, and heavenly desires; in all its religious devotions, and devout performances; in all its holy and humble approaches to God through a Mediator. This principle is so divine, that it is called a participation of the divine nature (b), not of deity, but a participation of divine goodness, holiness, and true righteousness (c). It is so divinely impregnable, that it cannot be destroyed, or rooted out of the soul, by all the cunning art or malice of the tumultuous wicked world; nor by all the power of indwelling corruption, in conjunction with all the powers and efforts of hell itself. It is very active for God; and always *works by love* to him (d).

2d. This divine principle is called the *Seed of God*, which remaineth in the believer, or *who-soever is born of God* (e). And this is the grand reason of his not committing sin with that full consent of will, by free choice, taking delight and pleasure therein, as those do, who are graceless, and destitute of this principle. Nor is it possible for that soul thus principled, to commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world* (f): This principle is a divine seed from God, and is born of God; the strength and activity of

(a) 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. (b) 2 Pet. i. 5. (c) Eph. iv. 24. (d) Gal. v. 6. (e) 1 John. iii. 9. (f) 1 John v. 4.

of which is such, that it works through all opposition, it overcometh every enemy, both within and without at last. It is so operative and powerful, that it carries the soul above all sublunary things; it delights only in, and converseth with heavenly objects and things (*b*). How sublime? How noble this principle! all its inclinations, all its motions are heavenly, holy, spiritual, and pure. Its aim and end, (in all its vigour, in all its activity) is to advance the honour and glory of its own gracious God and Father, in the full and intire mortification of the old man; and a humble submission to the divine will in every dispensation (*i*).

3d. This divine *principle* is called the *inward man* (*k*). And it is the inward man in regard to the soul itself; not to the body: It is that inward principle, by which the godly soul doth truly love God above all created beings; hence it takes delight in the law of God, and doth taste an inexpressible sweetness in his infinite goodness. It excites the soul to all chearful obedience, that with the greatest pleasure it walks with God. It cannot love, therefore cannot countenance, much less propagate the kingdom of darkness. As it is an internal principle, so it is the root of true and powerful religion in the heart, *It is the kingdom of God within you* (*l*). It consists not in outward forms and modes of worship, but in the power of godliness. But, notwithstanding it is

(*b*) Phil. iii. 20.

(*i*) 1 Sam. iii. 18.

(*k*) Rom. vii. 22.

(*l*) Luke xvii. 21.

internal in regard to the soul, it indeed discovers itself in external acts of piety; it does not, it cannot indulge sloth in the work and service of God. No, no, it is a living, therefore an active, operative principle. It is that to the soul, that the soul is to the body, before the dissolution; for as the soul is the life of the body, so this divine principle is the life of the soul; and the Holy Spirit, the eternal God, is the life of this principle. Pray observe it. I'll repeat it. This principle is that to the soul, that the soul is to the body, before its dissolution; for as the soul is the life of the body, so this divine principle is the life of the soul; and the Holy Spirit, the eternal God, is the life of this principle. Oh! this living principle is a heaven-born creature; God is eminently in it; God is sole author of it; and he is the supporter of it. This is indeed the supernatural *workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works* (m). It is part of the deep and profound mystery of *godliness*. It is *that*, that lives upon, and delights in nothing but divine love and goodness in a Mediator. In a word, this mysterious work of God, is an epistle of Christ, wrote in every gracious heart, *not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God* (n).

This leads me to consider,

II. Why this *principle* is not to be satisfied with any thing short of infinite goodness.

1st. This

(m) Eph. ii. 10.

(n) 2 Cor. iii. 3.

1st. This divine principle of spiritual life, is comprehensive of all the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit, and therefore of a divine faith, by which it views the transcendent amiableness of the divine perfections of the deity in the Mediator. And as the soul views a ravishing beauty, so it in reality doth taste an unexpressible sweetness, in the infinite love and goodness of God as reconciled. And this is the grand reason of its being ever restless for farther tastes, and participations thereof. Nor will it ever be intirely and compleatly satisfied, till the soul is filled therewith, to the utmost; which will not be on this side eternity. Oh, this new creature, this spiritual life, this child of God, this babe of grace! It is such a noble pedigree, divine extract, glorious descent and heavenly birth, that it is utterly impossible it should be satisfied with any thing short of infinite goodness. For every creature is fond of its own likeness. And where can we find any meer creature in heaven or earth, that bears such a resemblance, or carries such a strong representation of this new creature, as God in our nature, in regard of his communicable perfections: which perfections, the heaven born soul sucks in, as every way suitable to the nature of the new creature, or this divine principle.

2d. This new man, or divine principle, is too spiritual, high and noble, to live upon, or to be delighted with earthly trash. It is a divine flame, ever ascending upwards; it scorns to stoop downwards, it never grovels in the dust, among crea-

tures to seek its satisfaction. It well knows that is not to be found but in *the fountain of living waters* (o). Our Lord says, it is in the soul a *well of water* (p); and the property of it is to spring upwards; not downward. It is a *well of water springing up into everlasting life*. This genuine offspring of God, can live and delight in nothing but eternal love, in the contemplation of which, it solaces itself continually, and is ravished with the unutterable sweetness thereof, as the only suitable good for this new creature. Therefore it cannot be satisfied with any thing short thereof.

gd. Every thing in, and of the world, is so low, mean and insipid to this divine original, that it can taste no sweetness therein: it cannot relish such sordid things; they are quite tasteless and unsavoury to a truly spiritual soul; therefore cannot satisfy it. Can royal blood, a majestick Prince, live upon, and be satisfied with beggars fare? no more can this royal Babe, this royal blood (q), live upon, and be satisfied with these base, low spirited things, which can only gratify the flesh. Every thing of the world, is comprised in these three; *Profits, Pleasures, Honours*. And if a godly soul was possessed of one, of the other, and of all these, yet they could not satisfy it. Because all these things are but flesh, and this principle (of which we are speaking) is nothing but spirit, or altogether spiritual: consequently, the best things of the world can be no suitable

match

(o) Jer. ii. 13.

(p) John iv. 14.

(q) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

match for it ; no, it must be something more noble, more durable, something divine, to satisfy it. And what can that be, but infinite goodness, infinite sweetness. It is only the dainties of heaven, divine fatness, the fatness of God's house; *i. e.* divine grace and goodness, divine love and mercy, communicated to God's people, in their waiting upon him in his house of prayer, can, and doth abundantly satisfy the godly soul, if the psalmist may be believed. *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures* (r). [Thy pleasures] viz. those pleasures that arise from a sense and taste of thy loving kindness: they are those divine pleasures which flow from that river of infinite love in the heart of God, *the streams whereof make glad the city of God* (s).

4th. Again, faith, (the eye of the new creature) never looks at, and therefore thirsts not after temporalities; they being things that are no way adapted to please, or gratify the spiritual desires of a godly soul. They are too mean, too low and beggarly, they are not substantial and lasting, they are perishing toys; faith disdains to cast an eye upon them. It must be a lasting, yea an everlasting substance, to match an immortal principle. And without a suitable match, it cannot be satisfied. Nothing inferior to eternal

(r) Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8.

(s) Psalm xlv. 4.

nal things, is, or can be sufficient to please, delight, and content the heaven-born creature, the godly soul. Hence faith looks only to those things which are eternal. *While* (saith the apostle) *we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (1).* The words at first sight seem either a contradiction, or an impossibility. For how can we look at things which are not seen? answer, by faith the believer looks at those things which are invisible to, and therefore not seen by the bodily eye. Now these spiritual invisible things are eternal, not temporal, not perishing things, for such things are too contemptible to be looked at, much less to be embraced by a creature of such high and spiritual birth as the new man. It looks at eternal things, because only eternal love infinite good can satisfy it.

5th. Though temporal things suit the flesh, yet they are too base-born for the spirit of this divine principle in a godly soul, to take any delight in, much less to be satisfied with. They have no such quality as to excite spiritual joy, delight, and satisfaction to the spiritually minded soul. The new creature is purely divine: hence something of God, and nothing but what is divinely good from him, doth it delight in, and eagerly pursue. *For* (says the apostle) *they that*

(1) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit (u). The things of the spirit, are all of them infinitely superior to the flesh; they are heavenly and divine. Such as the love of God, which he shed abroad in our hearts (w). He comforts the godly; guides into all truth; discovers and applies the things of Christ (x). These are the glorious things of the spirit, the flows and effects of infinite goodness. Oh! this is the pleasant delicious food of saints, with which they spiritually thrive; in which they mightily rejoice, and by which they are proportionably satisfied. The godly soul minds the things of the spirit; these, these are things that it savours; such a soul sees a ravishing beauty in salvation by grace alone through Christ: and doth taste an overcoming sweetness in that divine love which is the spring and source thereof. Hence it is ever grasping after farther participations of that infinite goodness which alone can quiet and settle it. Ordinances, without the God of ordinances, are poor dry insipid things to a child of God. And no branch of divine worship is pleasant, nor profitable to the new creature, farther than, or in proportion to its enjoyment of God therein. Alas! what are external modes and forms, in what is called religion, if God is not graciously present. The godly can find no satisfaction, without they can experience the flows of divine love and grace. Worldly
pomp,

(u) Rom viii. 5. (w) Rom. v. 5. (x) John xvi. 7, 13, 14.

pomp, in, or out of worship will please the flesh, and suit the carnal professor extremely well. He can sit easy under the external forms of worship without any acquaintance with God, or the power of godliness, and thinks all is well with him. But oh! the new creature is panting after God: without whom it cannot be satisfied in no one duty. What is prayer? What is reading the word of God, or hearing of it preached and opened? if the believer cannot enjoy sweet converse with God therein. Without sensible communion he is restless; he is restless till he finds his beloved (y), and can have a fresh taste of the sweetness of divine love, which alone can settle and satisfy the godly soul.

6th. As this divine principle is the true image of God, and God alone is the life of it; so nothing inferior to infinite goodness can possibly satisfy it. Because no creature can be delighted with *that*, that is not agreeable to its own nature; and if it is not delighted, it is impossible it should be satisfied. Swine's food, will as well satisfy human nature, as any thing short of infinite goodness, can satisfy the spiritual nature of this divine principle of a godly soul. The godly are said to hunger and thirst after *righteousness* (z); and what righteousness can that be, but a conformity to God, and a participation of divine goodness. It cannot be the imputed righteousness of Christ for justification. Because that they are already

(y) Song iii. 1, 2.

(z) Matt. v. 6.

already favoured with, in as full and compleat manner as ever will be. But this righteousness after which the godly hunger and thirst, is inherent, and at present imperfect in regard to its degrees, though it is perfect in its kind. Oh! the godly soul thirsteth for farther and higher degrees of heart holiness, and a larger measure of infinite goodness. For as its conformity to God is at present but partial, the soul cannot be content therewith. Hence it is thirsting after a full and perfect conformity to the divine perfections of its gracious God, so far as it can ever be capable. For holiness and conformity to God, is always proportionable to the communications we receive, and suck in from the divine goodness. And by reason of this divine principle, the godly soul will be ever restless, till it arrives to the utmost perfection of divine holiness. For it cannot be perfectly happy, till it is perfectly holy. And a divine rectitude, a god-like righteousness, is *that* the godly now on earth shall be filled with in heaven above, and not till then, or till they arrive there; then the promise will be made good: *They shall be filled.* The king's daughter will be there, and then all glorious within (a). This is *that* infinite goodness, the true christian is so eagerly pursuing and thirsting after, and without which the godly soul cannot be fully satisfied in this world.

(a) Psal. xlv. 13.

This leads me to what I proposed.

III. To prove the point, viz. *That nothing short of infinite goodness is sufficient to satisfy the divine principle of a godly soul.*

One would think indeed there is no need of this; it having been already sufficiently proved. However, as it is a point of importance, and apt to be rejected by the carnal minded professor, I am willing this experimental truth should receive a further confirmation, by adding a few more passages of scripture, the scope of which are a full proof of this glorious truth. See Psal. xlii. 1, 2. *As the hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:* These are strong expressions, they import great zeal: when we pant, the heart and all the powers of the body, throb and beat, for want of breath. We flutter to and fro, till recovered. So the gracious soul pants and flutters for the enjoyment of God. The vehemency and strength of the spiritual desires of the godly soul, for the participation of divine goodness are set forth by the metaphor of panting. The hart is a creature very thirsty by nature, but much more so, when it has been hunted. Nothing but water will satisfy a hunted hart. To which this alludes. If you turn this creature into the finest and fattest pastures, when it is very thirsty by being hunted, it will not care to feed therein: no, it is vehement thirsty, it lingers after the water-brooks. No-
thing

thing will now satisfy it but water : for water suits its present appetite and inclination. Fat and green pastures, will not satisfy this creature in its present condition ; because that cannot quench its thirst. So if the godly are turned into the fat pastures of worldly pleasures, they can take no delight therein. The divine principle of a godly soul, is not to be satisfied with carnal pleasures and sensual delights. For as the hart panteth after the natural water-brooks, so the godly soul, panteth after the divine water-brooks of eternal love, eternal life. If the godly are denied (but for a short season) the enjoyment of God, you may see it makes them weep day and night, ver. 3. Which is a strong proof that nothing short of infinite goodness can satisfy a godly soul. If a believer can but enjoy the gracious presence of God, all is well with him. And what a mercy is it, that wicked men, nor devils, persecutions, nor prisons can hinder them from the participation of infinite love and goodness. If they are in a dungeon with the gracious presence of God, it makes it more delightful than a palace without him. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* A glorious proof that the godly cannot be satisfied, but with infinite goodness. To the same import is that, in Psalm lxiii. 1. *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, &c.* Here the psalmist discovers an appropriating

faith: and those expressions, *Early, Thirsteth, Longeth*, denote the great strength and vigour of his holy and heavenly desires for the enjoyment of God. They prove that his soul was restless for an intimate, familiar, sensible communion with God. And how strong are the expressions in ver. 8. *My soul followeth hard after thee.* Oh it is the communications of thy love, the enjoyment, the participation of infinite goodness my soul is in the eager pursuit of, as that which alone will satisfy the new creature. We hear not one word of his following hard after a crown and kingdom, as things that would satisfy the vast desires of his soul. No, those things were but shadows in comparison to infinite goodness, which the new creature sucks in from the fountain of living waters. Every subject of grace will say for himself, it is only My God can please and satisfy my soul. And God himself is so delighted with his own image in the godly soul, that he will work miracles rather than his children shall want the waters of life. See Isaiah xli. 17, 18. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.* That God will work such astonishing wonders for the relief of the godly in their straits, when they are ready to sink
for

for want of the communications of divine goodness, is an undeniable proof that nothing short of infinite love and goodness, is sufficient to satisfy them. These poor and needy souls, who are seeking water, the water of divine grace, are such, who in the light of the spirit are made to see their poverty as sinners, that they have lost their original rectitude, and so are poor and miserable in themselves, as the descendants of Adam. They see, and experimentally know their souls must be enriched, from the fountain of all good, the God of all grace, or they must be eternally poor, eternally miserable: and having tasted *the Lord is good*: they are eagerly seeking water; viz. they are seeking after farther participations of divine grace and goodness. They seek water and there is none: *None*, in any meer creature as the fountain thereof. No fountain of grace, and infinite goodness but in God. Nor none, viz. no streams of grace from the fountain, no stream of grace in their own souls, that they can see, or feel when in the dark: for when God hides his face, this is often the case of the godly. They are apt to think they have deceived themselves with meer notions: and cannot be content without God. They are seeking after those tastes and feelings, they heretofore had some gracious experience of; viz. the manifestation of divine love, the communication of quickening grace: this is the divine water the godly are continually seeking after; as the most valuable blessing in all the world. As that
without

without which they are restless and cannot be content. And that we might not doubt the vehement longing, and strong desires of the godly, for the water of divine grace, it is said, *their tongue faileth for thirst.*

Thirst is an extream want, and nothing but a sufficient quantity of suitable moisture, internally applied, can satisfy thirst: and if it is not timely applied, the man would faint, his tongue would fail, and his spirit sink. So the godly soul would faint and fail, if not supplied with the water of life, with infinite goodness. Because nothing inferior is suitable to the nature of the divine principle of a godly soul, nor nothing short thereof can possibly satisfy it. As this passage with others do abundantly prove.

This leads me to take notice,

Secondly, *That heaven itself would not be a state, or place of real happiness to a gracious soul, without the enjoyment of the gracious presence of God.*

The truth of this proposition will appear; if we duly consider the nature of the soul, which is a spirit; and the nature of the divine principle from whence the soul is denominated godly, and by which it is sublimated, even in this world. And if it can be satisfied with nothing short of infinite goodness in this world, as has been proved, how is it possible any thing inferior to the divine Being, can render it really happy in heaven: when, and where the soul is abundantly enlarged,

enlarged, in all its powers, and freed from all its imperfections. The gracious presence of God makes an heaven, where ever it is enjoyed : and nothing but infinite goodness, can make a spiritual creature truly happy. But is this to be found in, or can it be derived from any meer creature, how highly soever exalted ? saints and angels are but creatures, and as such they are finite : nor can the angels communicate happiness to souls above ; they have not an infinite fulness in themselves, they are not the fountain of infinite goodness : they cannot fill the spacious cavities of an immortal soul ; and if the soul is not filled, it cannot be satisfied, and if not satisfied, it cannot be truly happy. Can a soul be truly happy without the enjoyment of God's gracious presence, when it is inseparably united to Christ its exalted head, from whom it received such a divine principle, as to capacitate it for the reception of divine goodness ? utterly impossible this. Souls in heaven, are altogether perfect, being presented without *spot or wrinkle, or any such thing* : having no manner of blemish (b). And as to its powers, they are expanded to the utmost, its desires are stretched out, they are capacious, too capacious for any thing, but infinite goodness to satisfy. How then, can a soul in heaven, be truly happy without the gracious presence of God ? one glorified saint, cannot make another happy without God. Nor can the innumerable company

(b) Eph. v. 27.

pany of angels do it. No, both angels and saints must say, concerning the communications of infinite goodness, from whence ariseth the real happiness of glorified souls, as the depth, and the sea (c); *it is not in me, it is not in me*. Souls in heaven, delight in, and are happy with their union to, and communion with one another in Christ, their exalted head, no farther than, or in proportion to the divine impressions of the all-glorious God which they behold, with a ravishing admiration in each other (d). Every glorified soul is swallowed up in, and ravished with the communicable perfections of its gracious God. They are filled with joy unspeakable, in beholding God in themselves. Therefore they cannot be happy without his gracious presence.

2d. There can be no real happiness in heaven, if the soul is not satisfied; and satisfaction to a gracious soul ariseth from, or consisteth in the soul's likeness to God: and the more we enjoy of God, the more we are like to God. A likeness to God, in regard of all those divine perfections the soul is susceptible of, is that that satisfies and renders it happy. When the divine Being makes an impression upon the soul, an impression of his own image and likeness, by spreading himself upon all its powers, then it is satisfied. As the psalmist saith, *I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness* (e). Oh! it is the

(c) Job xxviii. 14.

(d) 2 Thess. i. 10.

(e) Psal. xvii. 15.

the likeness of God's majesty and glory, appearing in the person, and shining through our exalted Saviour; spreading itself over the soul; which makes it truly happy. When the body of the saints awake out of the sleep of death, at the resurrection day, then both body and soul, will be satisfied with the divine likeness. Hence it is obvious, that nothing will satisfy the soul, but the divine likeness, the likeness of God, and the enjoyment of his gracious presence in heaven above. The carnal heart, a Christless soul, looks upon heaven, merely as a place, a place of some kind of pleasure; but what is it they know not. They dream of only carnal pleasures, rest and ease; a cessation of trouble, a great plenty of sensual delights, suited to gratify the flesh; for they can taste, nor relish nothing of divine things, for want of a divine principle. But oh! the heaven-born soul, raised to the eternal mansions, is quite another creature. Nothing earthly, nor sensual, can accommodate or delight it. No, no, its true, its real happiness stands in the fruition, and enjoyment of God. *Whom have I in heaven but thee.*

3d. The essential happiness of a glorified soul, consists in the real possession and enjoyment of *that* which is superior to itself. But no meer creature is superior to glorified souls above: therefore it must be eternal goodness, infinite love, wherewith they are filled, and possessed, and by which their essential happiness is constituted.

tuted. For nothing merely extrinsical to itself, (as every other creature is) can constitute an immortal spirit's happiness. The glorified soul, must be possessed with an intrinsical fulness, or it cannot be really happy. Possessed with infinite uncreated goodness, as nutritious to the divine principle, received from the all-fulness in Christ Jesus. And as *Christ in you*, (i. e. the saints while they are in this world) *is the hope of glory*, viz. future glory in heaven above: so Christ in the souls of those in the eternal mansions, I say Christ in all his fulness of Deity, is the very essence of that glory which the saints below, expected to enjoy above, in the eternal mansions of heaven. And it is such a glory that constitutes the essential happiness of the soul. And without which, heaven itself, nor all the glorious angels above, could yield the soul any solid joy. The everlasting felicity, the eternal joy, and real happiness of the glorified soul, consisteth in the gracious, and continual emanations of infinite love and goodness: filling the soul with all the fulness of God. As prayed for, by the apostle, Eph. iii. 19. But will not be fully answered on this side eternity. When we get above, when we arrive to *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; when we enter into glory, then, and there, it will be answered to the utmost extent. Oh! it is the all-fulness of God, wherewith the soul will be ravished, and filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

And

And, without the enjoyment of infinite goodness, the soul cannot be intirely satisfied; consequently it cannot be perfectly happy, if it could be in heaven without communion with God. No; *Whom have I in heaven but thee.*

I will now make some use of what has been said.

Use I. Let us admire the wonderful power and efficacy of divine grace. What an astonishing alteration it makes, when it is once enthroned in the heart of a poor sinner! it makes the *earthly, sensual, devilish* sinner, become a spiritual man, a holy saint. Oh! how it illuminates the understanding with rays of divine light, whereby it beholds a ravishing beauty in religion, an unexpressible worth and preciousness in Christ as a Saviour. It softens the hard heart, makes the most obstinate flexible. It humbles the proud, and brings down the lofty sinner. It dethrones enmity in the heart, against God. It rectifies the distempered affections, and excites such spiritual love to God, that his honour and glory is made the ultimate end of every duty.

Use II. Hence we see, how wonderfully divine grace beautifies, ennobles and enricheth its subjects. Grace makes the once blackmoor sinner, now shine bright with rays of sanctity.

Oh, how humble, heavenly, holy and god-like, does it make a poor worm! grace (implanted in the heart) brings the soul to abhor sin; it can no longer delight in wallowing in the mire thereof: it cannot sacrifice to proud carnal sinful self. It will now make no more *provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. No, divine grace excites the soul to love, and live upon God, in Christ. *Its great design is to mortify the deeds of the body*. Conformity to God, is eyed, as that in which the soul's true joy and happiness doth consist. *The affections are set on things above*. And the conversation of the godly soul is in heaven. Oh, what a noble life does a believer live!

Use III. Hence we see the dangerous mistake, the carnal polite world do make; and how false their assertions; in saying, the godly are a poor low-lived, mean spirited set of people, and they look upon them, as an ignorant contemptible pack of miscreants. Alas! they are under a sad mistake, they know nothing of high life; except an high life of sin against God. They are utter strangers to religion, and the power of godliness. They know nothing of the divine pleasures of a religious life; the high and delicious fare upon which the godly live. Humble christians, godly souls, live a life of faith, a divine life, and that is a truly grand, noble high life. But this kind of life, being purely spiritual, it is no wonder the carnal world should mistake it for low and mean.

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Use IV. The doctrine we have been insisting upon, reproves poor earthly muck-worms, and carnal professors, who never seek after God, in all their religious pretensions, and devotions: but content themselves with meer externals of religion, being strangers to its internal power upon their hearts. Poor carnal souls! they feed upon ashes, and take delight in nothing but earthly trash. Their carnal heart tells them, there is nothing desirable in religion; nor any satisfying good, in the infinitely good and gracious God. As tho' his service was a mean employment, a perfect drudgery, and absolute slavery: and that nothing valuable or truly precious, could be obtained thereby. Alas! such poor mean souls, loudly proclaim themselves Godless, Christless, graceless. They taste no sweetness, in any thing, but their sensual delights, and sinful pleasures. They act like swine, who never look upwards for any mercy, but are always greedy, and covetous of that which will gratify the flesh, and will end in their everlasting destruction, if divine grace interpose not. Ah! poor graceless soul, thou art crying out, give, O give me much of the world, give me the delights, profits, honours, pleasures thereof; these, O these are sweet things, they suit my inclination, they please my taste. But, let us behold with thankful admiration the powerful influences of divine grace in the hearts of the godly who are crying out, O give me much of God, much of his gracious

cious presence, this, O this is the life of my soul, in this I taste an overcoming sweetness, with this I am delighted. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee.*

I shall now take the liberty of dropping a few words concerning the deceased. Not with any intention to aggrandize her character: for that can be of no service, nor does she need any such paltry stuff: but that the living, her surviving friends and relations, might be encouraged, and excited to thankfulness: that we might adore our covenant-keeping God, and that grace of his, which was present with her, from first to last, in her death-bed affliction.—I asked her some days before her death, how she fared, in regard to the inward man, whether she was comfortable in her soul; to which she replied in the affirmative. And said, she always had been subject to fears, concerning her future state, ever since she hoped she had some acquaintance with Christ. And that her fears would always prevail, and grow stronger, whenever she laboured under any particular illness of body. But she blessed God, that he had removed all her fears in this affliction, and that she was entirely free from all hesitations. She mentioned many portions of scripture which were of great comfort, and support to her soul, under her affliction.

But

But my memory is too treacherous to retain them all: however I well remember that she repeated these words, *God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* To which, I said to this effect, “that saving faith, “always looks to, and relies upon the un- “changeableness, and faithfulness of God, in “covenant, there it strikes anchor, and upon “that rock the soul doth stay and rest itself, in “the midst of storms and tempests.” To which she replied, yes, I find it so, and that upon the love, and faithfulness of a gracious God, she relied for eternal salvation, or to that effect.——I asked her, how her mind stood, in regard to life or death, whether she chose one rather than the other; to which, she said, I am resigned to the will of God, either to live or die, or to that effect.——The words of our text, (as I hinted before) were very precious to her, and she drew much comfort, and spiritual consolation from them. And when she was so weak, that she could scarcely utter herself, she discovered great pleasure, and delight, in slowly uttering these words; *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* What a comforting consideration, to surviving christian friends, and relations, must such a dying testimony of divine love be! in those
awful

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awful moments, when her precious soul is just going to make its appearance before an infinitely holy, just and righteous God; it shrinks not back, but hastens into the divine imbraces of that everlasting love, of which she had such delightful views and pleasing tastes in her death-bed affliction.

T H E E N D.



